



Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Historical Issues of this Newsletter

Announcement

The Nation Has a New Australian Statistician



Dennis Trewin, the Australian Statistician for almost 7 years, retired at the end of 2006. Dennis's tenure as the head of the ABS was both exciting and fruitful with many highlights. These included two successful Censuses and the ABS Centenary of Statistics year in 2005. He led a significant development of Australia's official statistical service and the launch of ABS statistics free on the web.

Dennis's successor is Brian Pink. Brian had a long career in the ABS prior to his appointment as New Zealand Government Statistician in October 2000. He started his career in the NSW Regional Office before

moving to Canberra where his experiences included economic statistics and technical services.

Brian was also Deputy Commonwealth Statistician and Government Statistician for WA from 1987 to 1993. Brian is currently President of the International Association of Official Statisticians and Vice Chair of the OECD Committee of Statistics.

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Census



On-line Census Products:

QuickMaps - cat. no. 2063.0

Product description

QuickMaps are designed to provide users with quick and easy access to thematically mapped Census statistics. The maps will depict selected population, ethnicity, education, family, income, labour force and dwelling characteristics. Users will have the opportunity to select a level of geographic representation that best suits their needs.

The maps contain identifiers for clients to recognise selected areas. Identifiers include main roads, rivers, airports and selected areas labelled. A scale bar is included on each map for reference.

Exporting options

Users will be able to export the thematic maps displayed in the 'QuickMaps' product, via the following formats:

- Adobe Acrobat (.PDF files)
- Portable Network Graphics (.PNG files)

Anticipated release dates

QuickMaps will be released in two phases:

- First Release Maps: expected to be June 2007
- Second Release Maps: expected to be October 2007

Pricing: Free

More Information on new Census products can be found at www.abs.gov.au , then go to the Census home page (from the header navigator) and look for New Product Briefs in the right-hand navigator.

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Statistical Developments

Statistical Training

A program of courses aimed at developing skills for high quality statistical collection and statistical analysis is the result of an ABS initiative in statistical training. The program, developed in a collaboration between the ABS training section (National Statistical Training Institute or NSTI) and all ABS Regional Offices, works towards coordinating a national approach to external statistical training. The contents of the training courses are intended to complement statistical training already offered by state governments and private providers.

A core set of five courses will provide statistical training to external clients. These are:

- Principles of Questionnaire Design
- Basic Statistical Analysis
- Basic Survey Design
- Making Quality Informed Decisions
- Turning Data Into Information.

Details of these courses and the 2007 Training Calendar are available from the ABS web site under **Services We Provide/ABS Training**.

In Queensland, the ABS Regional Office provides statistical training in its Brisbane office and can deliver external training to regional centres.

For further information or to discuss your training needs contact the Queensland Statistical Consultancy Unit on 07 3222 6155 or email training@abs.gov.au.

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Have Your Say in the Development of Service Industry Surveys

The ABS is planning to conduct surveys for the 2007-08 financial year on:

- Pubs, Taverns and Bars
- Clubs (Hospitality)
- Public Libraries
- Museums
- Legal Practices.

Consultations between the Service Industry National Statistics Centre (SI-NSC) and relevant stakeholders will commence in April 2007. The aim of these consultations is to develop a common understanding between the ABS and key clients about the purpose of each survey. The consultations will identify issues that could have an effect on the development, implementation or output of the survey, including the purpose for which clients intend to use the results and the content, scope and level of accuracy required to meet their needs.

The SI-NSC will contact those organisations that made relevant submissions to the 2005 Service Industry Survey Forward Work Program review for consultations in the broad development phase. However, if you did not make a relevant submission to the review but would still like to be included in the development of any of these surveys please contact Gabrielle Robbie, Acting Director, SI-NSC in Canberra (details below).

For further information please contact Gabrielle Robbie on 02 6252 6133 or service.industries.program@abs.gov.au or go to www.abs.gov.au and visit the

Statistics about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples

Improving Identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples in Mortality Data

Despite efforts to improve the recording of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin in deaths data, there are still significant deficiencies in the quality of these data. While it is considered likely that most deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are registered, it is estimated that only 56% of deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people were registered as such in the period 2001-05 (**Deaths, Australia**, cat. no. 3302.0).

Mortality data, and particularly life expectancy figures, remain a key indicator of well-being and are critical to policy makers and researchers who are working toward improving outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. As such, improving the identification of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in mortality data is a key priority for the ABS and a national project is currently being undertaken to improve quality.

The project considers all aspects of mortality data collection, from when a death occurs and is registered, through to publication and dissemination of data. Components of the project include:

- analyses to better understand the undercoverage of deaths of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- raising awareness of people providing information about a death, including funeral directors and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- analysis and improvement of processes applied in collecting and processing data
- reviewing processes for disseminating data, including better informing data users of limitations of the data.

The first phase of the project is due to be completed by July this year.

It is expected that improvements in the quality of mortality data will lead to flow on effects, such as improvements in the methodologies used to calculate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' life expectancy and population estimates and projections. Increasing the robustness of these statistical series will allow policy makers and researchers to undertake more detailed analysis than the current quality of the data can support.

The ABS will also be consulting with and seeking the support of stakeholders throughout the project.

For further information, please contact **Michaela McGuigan** on **07 3222 6288**.

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Statistical Corner

Techniques to Confidentialise Data

Confidentiality is a major concern for the ABS. Legislation provides strong protection for the

confidentiality of information supplied to the ABS. The **Census and Statistics Act 1905** requires the ABS not to release statistics 'in a manner that is likely to enable the identification of a particular person or organisation'.

The ABS upholds the **Census and Statistics Act** with many processes and data checks. To ensure confidential data are not released in statistical tables, the ABS adheres to strict confidentiality rules. These rules are applied to both sample surveys and census data.

Confidentialising can have a negative impact on the usefulness of data as some of the detailed data may need to be suppressed or modified. The aim in making data confidential is to ensure that the confidentiality protection conditions are met while maximising the usefulness of the data outputs for analyses.

To Confidentialise Tabular Data

Where the number of units contributing to the value of a cell is less than a pre-specified threshold value, the cell will be suppressed to prevent disclosure. If a respondent or contributor accounts for a large percentage of a cell total, the cell will not be published. In addition, several techniques have been developed to minimise the risk of disclosure of information about the responding units. These techniques fall into three main categories:

Data Suppression

This technique simply involves not releasing information which may identify individuals in a cell. The primary suppression of sensitive or small cells may be complemented by the secondary suppression of other cells to prevent the original cell value from being derived as the difference between the row or column total and the sum of the rest of the row or column values.

Data Rounding

Random rounding involves replacing small values that would appear in a table with other small random numbers. This technique can be unbiased if done in an appropriate manner. A value is biased if the expected value of the data after a confidentiality technique has been applied does not equal the value of the original entry it is replacing.

Category Collapsing

Data items may be collapsed across classifications. Classifications which are very detailed, such as geography, country of birth, industry or occupation, can be collapsed down to a broader level.

Techniques used for confidentialising microdata and administrative data will be discussed in the next issue of **Statistical Update**.

More detailed information is available on the NSS website (Appendix 4 of the NSS Handbook).

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Other

New ABS Pricing Policy

In line with the release of the Australian Government Cost Recovery Guidelines in July 2005, the ABS has undertaken a review of its pricing policies.

As a result of this review, the amount of data freely available to download from the ABS web site has increased dramatically. This free data includes publications, spreadsheets, data cubes and detailed Census information. Simple enquiries are also answered free of charge via the National Information Referral Service (NIRS).

Customised data, including tables, graphs and maps not previously published, can be made on a cost recovery basis. In line with the guidelines, the cost of providing these customised services must be recovered from clients requesting these services.

The new pricing policy was implemented with effect from 2 October 2006. Whilst labour charges have increased marginally in accordance with recent cost increases, infrastructure (data) charges have decreased due to improvements in Information Technology systems.

More information on the ABS pricing policy can be found on the ABS web site. Go to **About us** and view the policy under **Corporate Information**. Alternately, enter 'ABS pricing policy' into the Google intra-site search field.

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ABS Web Site Rated No. 1

A critical evaluation of the new ABS web site **www.abs.gov.au** ranked it number 1 when compared with the web sites of other Australian Government Departments and second only to Statistics Netherlands site when compared with the sites of international statistical agencies.

The evaluation was undertaken in 2006 by Petra Bouvain from MP Marketing Partners. Ms Bouvain is also a lecturer in Marketing at Canberra University.

MP Marketing Partners were commissioned to evaluate the new ABS web site against the old site, using a set of criteria developed by the ProfNet Institute in Germany. The original study measured how customer friendly the web sites of 1,750 Government Departments from 204 countries were, using 146 criteria, grouped under the headings of layout, handling, content and interactivity. The analysis showed that both the new and old ABS sites performed very well when compared to other Australian Government Departments. Both old and new sites achieved a number 1 ranking.

The report also compared the ABS web site with 14 other statistical sites from around the world. The ABS did well in the analysis, with the new web site scoring significantly better than the old one. The ABS web site also performed well when compared to the other statistical agencies. The ABS site achieved a second place ranking behind that of Statistics Netherlands.

The ABS web site is being continuously improved. The ABS Web Development team welcomes your comments on the site. Email comments to **client.services@abs.gov.au** or take 2 minutes to **Rate the ABS web site** accessed by the blue button under the Corporate Information navigator on the top right of the ABS web site.

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Selected Releases (December 2006 to March 2007)

All ABS publications are free to download from the ABS web site. To inquire about release dates please contact the National Information and Referral Service on 1300 135 070 or email client.services@abs.gov.au.

New releases

2063.0 QuickMaps, Aug 2001
4610.0.55.002 Experimental Estimates of Regional Water Use, Australia, 2004-2005
4834.0.55.001 Changes in health: A snapshot, 1995 [to 2004-05]
4835.0.55.001 Physical Activity in Australia: A Snapshot, 2004-05

Annual and irregular releases

3218.0 Regional Population Growth, Australia
4159.3.55.001 General Social Survey, Queensland
4221.0 Schools, Australia
4513.0 Criminal Courts, Australia
4710.0 Housing and Infrastructure in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities, Australia
8127.0 Characteristics of Small Business, Australia
7111.0 Principal Agricultural Commodities, Australia, Preliminary
8158.0 Innovation in Australian Business, 2005

About Queensland

General Social Survey, Queensland (cat. no. 4159.3.55.001), to be released in March 2007, presents summary results for Queensland from the 2006 General Social Survey (GSS). The GSS brings together a wide range of information from different areas of social concern. Topics include health, housing, education, work, income, financial stress, assets and liabilities, transport, social capital, voluntary work, family and community, and crime. This product includes summary tables for different population groups and selected themes, together with more detailed cross-classified tables covering selected topics. The GSS results can be downloaded at no cost from the ABS website www.abs.gov.au.

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How to Use a Shorter URL

Would you like to be able to refer to ABS products through a meaningful URL (Uniform Resource Locator)?

Do your clients access the same statistical products on a regular basis and need a shortcut to get to the latest release?

There is an alternative, shorter URL that can be used to access the latest statistical releases. These URLs can be created by following the pattern below, where only the catalogue number will need to be changed to access different products.

www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/xxxx.y
(where xxxx.y is the ABS catalogue number)

ABS Contact Points

National Information and Referral Service

Telephone: 1300 135 070
TTY: 3222 6325

Consultants will assist with your statistical inquiries

Internet Site

www.abs.gov.au
email: client.services@abs.gov.au

E-kiosk

Electronic copies of ABS publications as far back as 1998 are available free from the ABS web site. Hard copy will be produced for those who require it (charges apply). Visit us

Example of a shortened URL:

<https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/3101.0>

on the 3rd floor at 639 Wickham Street
Brisbane and browse. We are open 8.30 a.m.
- 4.30 p.m.

Note: This shortened URL will always access the latest release of the product, and will not work for previous releases. Previous releases can easily be accessed via the "Past and Future Releases" tab once you have accessed the latest release.

Library

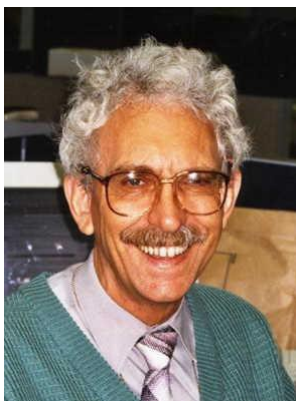
The Library is situated alongside our bookshop and provides a complete range of ABS current and historical publications.

A new Help document, outlining this process in more detail, has been released to our web site, see: **Help: Use a shorter URL to access statistics.**

These URLs can also be bookmarked. More information on bookmarking URLs can be found in **Bookmark a statistical product.**

Queensland Government Employees

- 1 Go to GovNet
- 2 Click on the GovInfo button
- 3 Click on the Data Hub
- 4 Click on ABS Data



If you wish to subscribe to Statistical Update and have it delivered to your inbox, or change your current subscription in any way, please contact Arthur Poulter 07 3222 6084.

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About this release

Statistical Update Queensland is a newsletter providing readers with information about statistical issues and developments relating to Queensland at either a state or regional level and advice about the release of significant ABS products and services.

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